

OBDII Reader: A GREAT INVESTMENT IN UNDERSTANDING YOUR MIATA

Bob and Diane Wido August 2017

I was frustrated recently because the “Check Engine” light on my 2006 Mazda Miata went on- again. The last time my check engine light came on, it turned out to be the EGR valve. With parts and labor, it set me back \$600. My little toy was beginning to get expensive.

I bemoaned my frustrations to a friend while attending a church conference in Columbus. (Hey, it was during a business session!) Anyway, he recommended that I purchase an On Board Diagnostic computer code reader. I did, and I wanted to write an article to tell you how totally cool this thing is. Every Miata owner should have one. OK- so what is it? Well, the plug in part is a small electronic device that plugs into your OBD port, (beneath the dashboard on the left hand side on my Miata). Plugging this thing in took less than a minute and requires no tools.

“Where does one go to get such a marvelous device?” you might ask. Where else: E-Bay! I got mine from a company in California for \$23.86 with free shipping. Just punch in OBD2 scan reader, and dozens will appear. Be careful, though, to make sure your interface will work on the car that you want to use it on. Trust me, it is easy to find these things for your vehicle.

In addition to the OBD reader, you need to download an app to either your iPhone or, in my case, to my iPad. The App I am using, and am reviewing in this article, is called Dash Command, and was purchased from the Apple store for \$9.99. Once you have the reader installed, go to your “Settings” window and change your Wi-Fi setting to the OBD reader. And you are in business!

OK, so once you have the two parts (the reader and the app), what does it do? Here are the top six features that I have found to be helpful: It reads and resets trouble codes. Turns out my “Check Engine Light” issue was only a lose gas cap. Beats spending \$600!

1. It gives you an accurate way to measure your car’s 0-60 time, or record your ¼ mile time (just make sure you have someone in the passenger seat doing this, of course).
2. Uses your phone’s GPS feature to map your course around any track, anywhere. If you have cell data available, it will actually download the Google Maps image to use as the background!
3. You can pull up a myriad of gauges for your vehicle, from coolant temperature to an MPG gauge, horsepower gauge, display engine horsepower and a speedometer.
4. A Skid Pad feature, that allows you to use the accelerometer built into your phone to calculate G-forces in any given direction.
5. A cool Fuel Tank Capacity feature that will give you an accurate indication of how far you can go on the gas you have in the tank.

So there you have it. For less than \$35 you can see all this information on your Miata, in real time. Even if you just use it to reset your “Check Engine” light once, the fun factor certainly makes this a worthwhile Miata investment!

Right: an example of the gauges that can be seen when using the app on your cell phone.



Above, plug in interface for the OBDII code reader.



ON PICTURE COMMERCIAL APP FOR APPLE PHONE/iPAD -DashCommand

